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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 648

[Docket No. 140117052-4402-02]

RIN 0648-XE077

Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Atlantic Bluefish Fishery; Quota Transfer

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Temporary rule; quota transfer.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces that the State of North Carolina is transferring a portion of its 2015 commercial Atlantic bluefish quota to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. These quota adjustments are necessary to comply with the Bluefish Fishery Management Plan quota transfer provision. This announcement informs the public of the revised commercial quota for each state involved.

DATES: Effective August 5, 2015, through December 31, 2015.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Reid Lichwell, Fishery Management Specialist, (978) 281-9112.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Regulations governing the bluefish fishery are found at 50 CFR part 648. The regulations require annual specification of a commercial quota that is

apportioned among the coastal states from Florida through Maine. The process to set the annual commercial quota and the percent allocated to each state are described in § 648.162.

The final rule implementing Amendment 1 to the Bluefish Fishery Management Plan published in the **Federal Register** on July 26, 2000 (65 FR 45844), provided a mechanism for transferring bluefish quota from one state to another. Two or more states, under mutual agreement and with the concurrence of the Administrator, Greater Atlantic Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), can transfer or combine bluefish commercial quota under § 648.162(e). The Regional Administrator is required to consider the criteria in § 648.162(e)(1) in the evaluation of requests for quota transfers or combinations.

North Carolina has agreed to transfer 200,000 lb (90,719 kg) of its 2015 commercial quota to Massachusetts. This transfer was prompted by state officials in Massachusetts to ensure their commercial bluefish quota is not exceeded. The Regional Administrator has determined that the criteria set forth in § 648.162(e)(1) are met. The revised bluefish quotas for calendar year 2015 are: North Carolina, 1,480,371 lb (671,485 kg); and Massachusetts, 552,036 lb (250,399 kg), based on the final 2015 Atlantic Bluefish Specifications.

Classification

This action is taken under 50 CFR part 648 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: August 3, 2015

Emily H. Menashes,
Acting Director,
Office of Sustainable Fisheries,
National Marine Fisheries Service.

